[redacted]

VILLAGE SURVEY

LITANI RIVER IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

LEBANON

by

[redacted]

The Ain villages in the affected by the Litani River Improvement Project are located along the northern branch of the Kamed Irrigation Canal. The area comprising these villages[1] includes the largest lots above the Kamed Irrigation Project which, when completed, will receive the irrigation water exceeding from lands in the south of Kamed the three main canals of Tyre. The Kamed Irrigation Project was begun under the French Mandate, continued during the French occupation, and partially completed under the Lebanese Republic. Due to a lack of funds, work on the project was discontinued in 1960 when about half of the canal area to be irrigated was under operating canals. It covers an area of 24,000 Dunums of land and extends a length of 37 kilometers (23 miles). It averages 1.2 kilometers (one mile) in width. The completed portion of the irrigation canals supplies water to prosperous new citrus orchards, banana groves and vegetable gardens.

---

1) Mr. Farmer is land agricultural economist with the Litani River Investigation Group and Chief of the Rural Sociology Survey Project. Mr. Khamis is an assistant professor of economics at the American University of Beirut who participated in the work as a consultant to the Lebanese Ministry of National Economy. Mr. Fayad is a junior economist on the staff of the Litani Group.

2) In the Arab Middle East an English mile = 2 kilos = one mean time the built-up area alone or the built-up area and all the surrounding land farmed by the villagers, which is legally approximate to it. To avoid misconceptions, two kinds have been adopted. The term 'village' is used to denote the larger concept which includes the built-up area and other lands appurtenant to it. The term 'settlement' is used to designate the dwelling area or the area itself, that, either of population or land area, is not considered in the use of these concepts.

Mlaqat is by far the largest, being at least twice as large as Jubbayl which is the second in size.

Al-Qurnat is a unit because its inhabitants consider it to be one. Within it, the individual villages regard themselves as independent, and the people even recognize some minor cultural differences. For example, it was said that the pronounced nasality differently in Bedrum, Mlaqat, and Jubbayl, that the people of one of the villages always marry people from the other villages rather than their own, that the women of one of the villages are more quarrelsome than those of another, and so on. Yet, in relation to the outside, al-Qurnat is a unit. Why? It is not because of close proximity, although of course this helps. The reason is that, with minor exceptions concentrated in Jubbayl, al-Qurnat is exclusively Greek Orthodox in religion and is completely surrounded, in depth, by Maronite (ordinarily Roman Catholic) villages. In 1933, Kfarnoun had a resident population of 10,334, plus an emigrant population of 14,000. Of the residents, 10,329 were Maronites, 3,005 were Shi'ah Muslims (Shi'a Muslims), and 1,000 were Greek Orthodox (All figures from Hamshih, 1936, pp. 410-411). Virtually all of the last must have been situated in al-Qurnat.

It has not been possible to go very far into this study without encountering the phenomenon of units of loyalty and identification. Since this topic will occupy an increasingly important position as we proceed, nothing more will be said about it at this point, except this. Beyond, and except for, kinship and local connections, sectarian affiliation in the Middle East is the strongest bond which can unite a group of people and the most impenetrable barrier which can separate one group from another.

FROM HERE TO MLAQAT

Mlaqat in its physical and cultural context, let us now turn to the village of al-Mlaqat itself. It might be asked why a community of farmers should settle in such an unfavorable environment in the first place. A tentative answer to this question will be presented in the chapter, "The Patterns of Culture Change." It might also be asked why, once established, such a community should grow greatly in size and continue to function even through periods of great economic difficulty. This is an easy question to ask. The remainder of this work is, essentially, an attempt to answer it.

Let us, now, in imagination, go to Mlaqat by automobile from Beirut. The trip will take perhaps an hour and a quarter.

Between Beirut and the mouth of the Dog River the road is lined, for the most part, with houses and citrus plantations, and lush stands of tall reeds. Beyond the river, however, the citrus plantations cease, but the banana plantations continue. We notice that water is brought to them in open concrete conduits. On the upper slopes to our right, we pass innumerable small villages and their olive and fig orchards.

THE MATERIAL BASE

THE PHYSICAL PATTERN OF THE VILLAGE

As a physical site, el-Mansūf has five parts (See Fig. 1): The hamlet of Ḥāret el-Ḥamra, the three-quarter circle each of which has been, at one time or another, the nucleus of a small house-cluster, and the village proper. The territory which belongs to the village is roughly triangular in shape. The apex of this triangle is at the eastern extremity of the village proper, the sides extend from the apex to the southern which forms the base. The paths which lead from the village proper to the shore, via Ras Shamra and Ras Shakhshūḥ, run along ridge crests. The boundaries of the village lie in the wadi (dry stream-bed) which are immediately adjacent to these crests, to the south and the north of them, respectively. All of the real property within the area thus defined belongs to the citizens of the village.

Ḥāret el-Ḥamra owes its existence to its location on a main highway, near a small, fertile river, and, possibly, to the two springs which were mentioned in the previous chapter. The development and present significance of this hamlet will be discussed further in Part III. Here we need only mention that Ḥāret el-Ḥamra has the most extensive fig orchards in the village, and, in a small building which is used as a store in the summer, there is a public telephone. This is the only electrical appliance of any kind, dependent upon a central public power system, in the entire village.

The shrines will be discussed in the chapter, "Formal Institutions." Of the three, only Ras Shakhshūḥ has recently had any significance as a residence site. At present, one family of caretakers lives there in the winter (See next two chapters). It will be noted that the site has a special name, 'araḍ, besides that of the shrine.

The village proper (see map, Fig. 1) is built, as has been noted before, on the flank of a crest, extending in a southwest-southeast direction for the greater part of one kilometer and steadily decreasing in altitude from 300 meters above sea level in the southeast to 160 meters in the northwest. The highest houses in the southeast are virtually on the top of the crest. As the map and figure indicate, the village is also sharply tilted in a southwest-southwest direction. For the most part, the houses, as well as the terraces, are oriented longitudinally along the contours of the ridge. In the section of the village which lies to the south of the main road there is a very full distribution of functioning terraces, but in most of the northern part, terraces are either entirely absent or (except in the eastern extremity) fallen into ruins. In its essential details, this settlement pattern belongs to a type which is commonplace in Lebanon (Thoumin, 1936, p. 281).

to the rains, is impossible under present circumstances. The most important crops are olives, figs, and grapes, some of which require irrigation in the growing season. The orchards and vineyards grow on terraced land which is situated generally on the lower parts of the ridge slopes and at the heads of the wadis. Some vegetables and a few small orchards of mulberries (remnants of the once predominant silk crop—*sikr*) grow immediately adjacent to the houses.

Al-Mansūr can be seen from a distance quite some time before the traveler enters it. The houses, varying in color from white to gray to tawny, are perched, one directly above another, it seems, on the southern slope of the ridge — a few are on the crest itself, at its highest point. They number about 90 and are typical of the Lebanese countryside. About one-quarter of them have the pointed roofs of red tile and other architectural features which are reminders of the decades before World War I. The majority, however, are of a much more austere style, with low windows and a flat roof made of timbers and a thick layer of packed earth. In some cases, the old earth roofs have been entirely replaced by cement ones. A few houses have been built completely anew in recent years, but with two exceptions they are not particularly different in general style from the older ones. Household furnishings and equipment show the considerable influence of industrialized Europe and America — mostly the former. Kerosene pressure lanterns and stoves have almost completely replaced older forms. Bedsteads, wardrobes, tables, and chairs — all of European manufacture and/or design — are used in every house. However, the village has no electricity and no system of running water.

From the observation of physical materials, one may easily deduce that al-Mansūr partakes both of the traditional and of the recently imported (that is, since the late 19th century). It therefore reflects the simultaneous culture change which at present colors life in Lebanon and in the Middle East generally. But material aspects of culture are only fragmentary indications of behavior. In themselves, they reveal little of a specific nature concerning motivations, loyalties, hopes, fears, and expectations. How did al-Mansūr, as a community of people, come into being? What are its traditional foundations of life? How, and to what extent, have its traditions been altered by the far-reaching cultural changes of the late 19th and 20th centuries? What problems face its people as a result of these changes?

II

According to tradition, al-Mansūr was established by a man who came to the site from Jabal Ḥawrān in Syria, after a sojourn in Baalbek. All the 113 members of the village are believed to be direct descendants of the founder, a belief which is indicated in a genealogy which is in the possession of the priest. There is some disagreement among the villagers as details